Holiday Stress Busters

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December can be a joyous month, but it's also a stressful time for many people caught up in the rush of holiday planning and family issues. Here are some helpful hints for reducing stress during what should be a fun and relaxing time:

- Recognize the signs of stress, such as irritability and anxiety. Avoid these by getting a handle on things instead of just letting them happen.

- Allow yourself to say "no." Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. Be realistic about what you can and cannot do during this busy month.

- Watch your diet. It's easy to overindulge in holiday treats that can affect your mood. Sugar overload will make you sluggish, for example, and the stimulating effect of caffeine may make you overanxious.

- Exercise. Not only will it combat those extra calories you're consuming, it will also relieve tension and provide relaxation.

With these practical tips, you can minimize the stress and depression that often accompany the holidays. You may even end up enjoying the holidays more than you thought you would.